

## Tell me more about the SC-Alt.

The assessment consists of a series of performance tasks and each task includes several items related to the activity. Tasks are similar to classroom activities and designed to be accessible by students with a variety of ways of responding. Each task is linked to a grade level standard that is simplified through an assessment standard and measurement guideline or extended standard.

Your child's teacher determines where your child starts the assessment by using a questionnaire that addresses your child's current knowledge of each content area. Students respond to approximately 5 to 7 tasks.

Sample tasks are available for review on the SCDE website.

## Can a student earn a high school diploma if he or she participates in the SC-Alt?

No, students who the IEP team determines meet the participation criteria for SC-Alt are students who are participating in a curriculum that does not lead to a high school diploma.

## Who do I contact to find out more about the SC-Alt?

If your child participates in the SC-Alt, you may contact your child's teachers or for information on SC-Alt you may go to the SCDE website at

<http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/Accountability/Assessment/SouthCarolinaAlternateAssessment.html>.

If you do not have access to a computer or the internet, ask your child's teachers for assistance in obtaining copies of information about SC-Alt.

## How are scores reported and used?

The SC-Alt scores are one source of information regarding student performance on academic skills. They provide an opportunity to track information on student progress from year to year and provide accountability information for state and federal reporting.

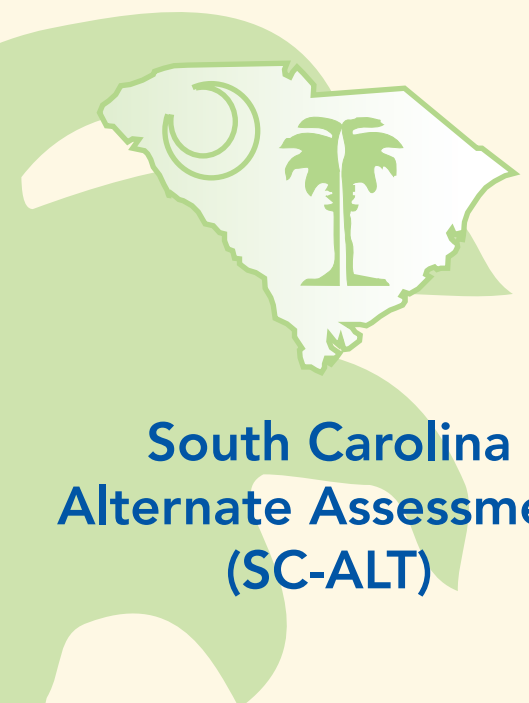
Each family receives an individual student report that provides information on their child's achievement in each content area. Scores are reported as Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, or Level 4. The information on what your child knows and can do in each of these levels is the most important information to you.

Additionally the student report includes recommended activities that families can use in supporting their child's learning. Examples of these activities are available on the SCDE website.

SC-Alt is also an accountability measure and the results provide information on how schools and districts are doing as well. The level 2 score is the score reported as meeting the state accountability requirements for "Basic" on the district report card and levels 3 and 4 are counted as meeting proficiency for the federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) reporting.

The SC-Alt only tests a student's achievement in academic subjects such as ELA, mathematics, science and social studies. IEP reports and other methods provide parents and teachers with information on how students are progressing in the other areas in which they receive instruction.

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## South Carolina Alternate Assessment (SC-ALT)

### What is the SC-Alt?

The South Carolina Alternate Assessment (SC-Alt) is a state assessment designed for students with significant cognitive disabilities who participate in a school curriculum that includes functional and life skills as well as academic instruction.

The SC-Alt consists of a series of performance tasks that allow students to respond in a variety of ways, such as pointing and eye gazing to the correct response, selecting objects or pictures or picture symbols that represent the correct answer, or reading letters, words, or sentences to complete a task. The tasks are linked to the state academic content standards through Assessment Standards and Measurement Guidelines in science and social studies and Extended Standards in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, and biology.

## What is meant by Assessment Standards and Measurement Guidelines or Extended Standards?

Academic standards are general statements of what students should know and be able to do when they complete each grade or by the end of their school program.

Committees of special educators and content specialists developed links to these academic standards to describe how they can be accessed in less complex ways for students who participate in the SC-Alt. The documents that describe these links are called Assessment Standards and Measurement Guidelines or Extended Standards. They can be viewed on the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) web-site at

<http://www.ed.sc.gov/agency/Accountability/Assessment/SouthCarolinaAlternateAssessment.html>.

The tasks for the SC-Alt are based on these linkages to the academic standards.

## Why should students with significant cognitive disabilities participate in academic instruction and assessment?

The primary reason to teach academic content to students who also require instruction in functional and life skills is to promote equal opportunity to receive the educational content all students receive. Educators are finding that once this opportunity is provided, many students are gaining useful skills that benefit them now and in the future. Students may not master all of the grade level content but they may master some content for their grade level. The SC-Alt provides a way to for them to demonstrate this mastery.

There are also laws that require that all students participate in academic instruction and assessment. Both the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) require that states provide an alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities that is linked to grade level academic content standards. The state Education Accountability Act of 1998 (EAA) specifies that all students must be included in state accountability systems.

## What are the criteria for participation in alternate assessment?

The SC-Alt should be administered to students who are age 8–13 or 15 on September 1 of the school year that the student is assessed and who meet all of the following criteria:

- The student demonstrates a significant cognitive disability and adaptive skills, which result in performance that is substantially below grade-level achievement expectations even with the use of accommodations;
- The student accesses the state approved curriculum standards at less complex levels and with extensively modified instruction;
- The student has current adaptive skills requiring extensive direct instruction and practice in multiple settings to accomplish the application and transfer of skills necessary for application in school, work, home, and community environments;
- The student is unable to apply or use academic skills across natural settings when instructed solely or primarily through classroom instruction; and
- The student's inability to achieve the state grade level achievement expectations is not the result of excessive or extended absences or social, cultural, or economic differences.

## Who are students with significant cognitive disabilities?

Students with significant cognitive disabilities are students who require substantial modifications, adaptations or supports to meaningfully access the subject area content and require intensive individualized instruction in order to acquire and generalize knowledge. Their school curriculum includes functional and life skills as well as academic instruction.

## Who decides if a student participates in SC-Alt?

The individualized education program (IEP) team, which includes the parents as equal members, determines how students will be assessed. They review information about the student's progress across multiple years and areas and decide if the student should take the state assessment with accommodations or if the student meets the criteria for alternate assessment.

## In what grades do students take the SC-Alt?

The SC-Alt is administered in grade bands. Students who are ages 8-10 participate in the elementary school assessment; students who are ages 11-13 take the middle school form, and students who are age 15 are tested with the high school form.